

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments to the claims and following remarks.

Appreciation is expressed to Examiner Mathew for his time and consideration during the personal interview that was conducted at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on March 30, 2004. The remarks below discuss the substance of the interview. Applicant also appreciates the indication in the Office Action that claims 4 and 23 contain allowable subject matter.

Information Disclosure Statement Acknowledgement

Applicant filed an Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) on September 15, 2003 including a form PTO-1449. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner acknowledge consideration of the information disclosed in the September 15, 2003 IDS and Form PTO-1449 by initialing, signing and returning the additional copy of form PTO-1449.

Summary of Office Action

In the October 16, 2003 Office Action, claims "1-x" were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent 6,293,967 to Shanley (Shanley'967); claims 9, 11, 12 and 24-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967; claims 14-19, and 27-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967 in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,876,449 to Alt et al. (Alt'449); and claims 4 and 13 were objected to for referring back to cancelled claim 3. Claims 4 and 23 were objected to for minor informalities, and were indicated to contain allowable subject matter.

Summary of Response to Office Action

By this Amendment, Claims 1, 2, 4, 13, 32 and 33 have been amended and new Claims 35-37 have been added. Claims 3 and 8 were canceled in prior Amendments. Thus, the claims currently pending in this application are Claims 1, 2, 4-7 and 9-37. Claims 1, 2, 32 and 33 are the only independent claims.

Response To Objection

Claims 4 and 13 were objected to in the October 16, 2003 Office Action for depending from cancelled claim 3. By this Amendment, claims 4 and 13 are amended to depend from claim 1 and to correct a typographical error in reciting the term "grooves." Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that the claims properly depend from pending claim 1. Withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Pending Claims Define Allowable Subject Matter

In the October 16, 2004 Office Action, claims "1-x" were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Shanley'967. This rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

As discussed during the personal interview on March 30, 2004, Shanley'967 discloses a device that is constructed differently from the claimed invention. In particular, during the personal interview, it was tentatively agreed that defining a bottom surface with respect to the grooves or defining the grooves as extending across at least one continuous surface would define over the art of record, and thus be allowable subject to a new search. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 2, 32 and 33 and all claims depending therefrom define over the art of record and are in form for allowance. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) is respectfully requested.

Claims 9, 11, 12 and 24-26 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967. This rejection is also respectfully traversed.

Claims 9, 11, and 12 depend from independent claim 1, and claims 24-26 depend from independent claim 2. Accordingly, each of these claims includes the features of either independent claim 1 or independent claim 2, which features were tentatively agreed to define over the art of record. Shanley'967 neither discloses nor teaches all the features of either claim 1 or claim 2, as discussed above, and therefore cannot disclose or teach the features of dependent claims 9, 11, 12, and 24-26. In accordance with the tentative agreements reached during the March 30, 2004 personal interview, it is respectfully submitted that claims 9, 11, 12, and 24-26 define allowable subject matter. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967 is respectfully requested.

Claims 14-19, and 27-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967 in view of Alt'449. This rejection is respectfully traversed for the following reasons.

Alt'449 fails to make up for the deficiencies of Shanley'967. Accordingly, in view of the tentative agreements reached during the March 30, 2004 personal interview, it is respectfully submitted that claims 14-19 and 27-31 define allowable subject matter. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shanley'967 in view of Alt'449 is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Early and favorable action with respect to this application is respectfully requested.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application, the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

If there are any other fees due in connection with the filing of this response, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-2985. If a fee is required for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 is not accounted for above, such an extension is requested and the fee should also be charged to our Deposit Account No. 50-2985.

Respectfully submitted,

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